

In 1996, 75 percent of participating rural physicians, or about 18,700 doctors, received less than \$1,520 each in bonus payments for the year. In addition to the complexities described above, the low level of payments may be attributable to carriers being required to review claims of physicians who receive the largest bonus payments. A 1999 study by the Health Care Financing Administration (HCFA) suggested this policy may discourage physicians from applying for the MIP program. More importantly, a 1999 General Accounting Office (GAO) report suggested the ten-percent bonus payments may be insufficient to have a significant influence on recruitment or retention of primary care physicians.

The American Academy of Family Physicians urges Congress to pass the "Medicare Incentive Payment Program Improvement Act of 2002," which would make any physician practicing in a HPSA automatically eligible for the ten-percent bonus without having to engage in any special billing or coding processes or submitting to a higher level of claims review. Such action will ensure that rural Medicare patients can continue to receive the care they depend on and deserve. Please let us know how we can assist in the effort to gain support for this important legislation.

Sincerely,

RICHARD G. ROBERTS,  
*Board Chair.*

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, I am pleased to rise today to introduce the Medicare Incentive Payment Program Improvement Act of 2002 with my distinguished colleague Senator BINGAMAN. This legislation makes important improvements to the current Medicare Incentive Payment, MIP Program. These refinements will go a long way in ensuring eligible rural physicians receive the Medicare bonus payment to which they are entitled.

The Medicare Incentive Payment Program was created in 1987 under the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act to serve as an incentive tool to recruit physicians to practice in Health Professional Shortage Areas, HPSAs, by providing a 10-percent Medicare bonus payment. There are approximately 2,800 federally designated HPSAs—75 percent of which are located in rural areas. In my State of Wyoming, over half of the counties are designated as a health professional shortage area and have a difficult time recruiting physicians.

Unfortunately, this well-intended program has not worked well due to the burden it places on providers. Under the current MIP programmatic structure, physicians are required to determine if the patient encounter occurred in a designated underserved areas, they must attach a code modifier to the billing claim and must undergo a stringent audit. Additionally, there is evidence that many physicians who would be eligible are not even aware of the program.

Therefore, the legislation we are introducing today alleviates the administrative burden on rural physicians by requiring Medicare carriers to determine eligibility. The Medicare Incentive Payment Program Improvement Act of 2002 also requires the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to es-

tablish a MIP education program for providers and establishes ongoing analysis of the MIP Program's ability to improve access to physician services for Medicare beneficiaries.

All physicians are currently struggling with the recent Medicare payment reduction of 5.4 percent in addition to the ever-increasing regulatory burden of participating in the Medicare Program. As rural providers tend to be disproportionately impacted by Medicare payment cuts, it has never been more important to ensure that the few rural physician incentive programs that exist have a positive effect on the stability of our rural health care delivery system. I strongly urge all my Senate colleagues interested in rural health to cosponsor the Medicare Incentive Payment Program Improvement Act of 2002.

#### SUBMITTED RESOLUTIONS

#### SENATE RESOLUTION 271—EX-PRESSING THE SENSE OF THE SENATE REGARDING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE AMBER PLAN IN RESPONDING TO CHILD ABDUCTIONS

Mrs. CLINTON submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary:

S. RES. 271

Whereas communities should implement an emergency alert plan such as the AMBER (America's Missing: Broadcast Emergency Response) Plan to expedite the recovery of abducted children;

Whereas the AMBER Plan, a partnership between law enforcement agencies and media officials, assists law enforcement, parents, and local communities to respond immediately to the most serious child abduction cases;

Whereas just as in a storm emergency, when warnings are broadcast locally, under AMBER, radio and television stations, as a public service, interrupt programming with a critical message from law enforcement regarding the description of a missing child;

Whereas the AMBER Plan was created in 1996 in memory of 9-year-old Amber Hagerman who was kidnapped and murdered in Arlington, Texas;

Whereas in response to community concern, the Association of Radio Managers with the assistance of area law enforcement in Arlington, Texas, created the AMBER Plan;

Whereas statistics from the Department of Justice show that 74 percent of kidnapped children who are later found murdered are killed within the first 3 hours of their abduction;

Whereas since the first few hours during which a child is missing are critical, the AMBER plan helps the community respond quickly;

Whereas since the first AMBER alert in 1997, AMBER plans have helped to recover 16 children throughout the country;

Whereas the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children endorses the AMBER Plan and is promoting the use of such emergency alert plans nationwide;

Whereas the AMBER Plan is responsible for reuniting children with their searching parents: Now, therefore, be it

*Resolved*, That it is the sense of the Senate that—

(1) the AMBER Plan is a powerful tool in fighting child abductions; and

(2) the AMBER Plan should be used in communities across the United States.

#### AMENDMENTS SUBMITTED AND PROPOSED

SA 3428. Mr. DODD (for himself and Mr. LIEBERMAN) proposed an amendment to amendment SA 3401 proposed by Mr. BAUCUS (for himself and Mr. GRASSLEY) to the bill (H.R. 3009) to extend the Andean Trade Preference Act, to grant additional trade benefits under that Act, and for other purposes.

SA 3429. Mr. KYL (for himself, Mr. GRAMM, and Mr. NICKLES) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3401 proposed by Mr. BAUCUS (for himself and Mr. GRASSLEY) to the bill (H.R. 3009) supra.

SA 3430. Mr. KERRY submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3401 proposed by Mr. BAUCUS (for himself and Mr. GRASSLEY) to the bill (H.R. 3009) supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 3431. Mrs. BOXER (for herself and Mrs. MURRAY) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3401 proposed by Mr. BAUCUS (for himself and Mr. GRASSLEY) to the bill (H.R. 3009) supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 3432. Mrs. BOXER (for herself, Ms. MIKULSKI, Mr. DURBIN, and Mr. REID) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3401 proposed by Mr. BAUCUS (for himself and Mr. GRASSLEY) to the bill (H.R. 3009) supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 3433. Mr. ROCKEFELLER (for himself, Ms. MIKULSKI, Mr. WELLSTONE, Mr. DURBIN, Mr. DEWINE, Ms. STABENOW, Mr. VOINOVICH, and Mr. SPECTER) proposed an amendment to amendment SA 3401 proposed by Mr. BAUCUS (for himself and Mr. GRASSLEY) to the bill (H.R. 3009) supra.

SA 3434. Mr. DASCHLE (for himself, Mr. ROCKEFELLER, Mr. WELLSTONE, Ms. MIKULSKI, Mr. DURBIN, Mr. DEWINE, Mr. VOINOVICH, and Ms. STABENOW) proposed an amendment to amendment SA 3433 proposed by Mr. ROCKEFELLER (for himself, Ms. MIKULSKI, Mr. WELLSTONE, Mr. DURBIN, Mr. DEWINE, Ms. STABENOW, Mr. VOINOVICH, and Mr. SPECTER) to the amendment SA 3401 proposed by Mr. BAUCUS (for himself and Mr. GRASSLEY) to the bill (H.R. 3009) supra.

SA 3435. Mr. INOUE submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3401 proposed by Mr. BAUCUS (for himself and Mr. GRASSLEY) to the bill (H.R. 3009) supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 3436. Mr. GRAHAM (for himself and Ms. MIKULSKI) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3401 proposed by Mr. BAUCUS (for himself and Mr. GRASSLEY) to the bill (H.R. 3009) supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 3437. Mr. GRAHAM submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3401 proposed by Mr. BAUCUS (for himself and Mr. GRASSLEY) to the bill (H.R. 3009) supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 3438. Mr. INOUE submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3401 proposed by Mr. BAUCUS (for himself and Mr. GRASSLEY) to the bill (H.R. 3009) supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

#### TEXT OF AMENDMENTS

**SA 3428.** Mr. DODD (for himself and Mr. LIEBERMAN) proposed an amendment to amendment SA 3401 proposed by Mr. BAUCUS (for himself and Mr. GRASSLEY) to the bill (H.R. 3009) to extend the Andean Trade Preference Act,